

Ecuadorian pastors wife dies after drinking tainted juice

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

Miami, FL—The wife of an Ecuadorian pastor was reported in guarded condition in a Quito hospital after drinking tainted juice which was reported to have been given to her husband following a church service on February 7.

Tania de Araus, the mother of several children, was in critical condition and her outlook was described as "guarded."

The carton of juice was reportedly given to her husband, Carlos, by someone leaving Quito's Iñaquito church that morning. Carlos Araus is a pastor on the staff of the 1,800 member evangelical congregation located across the street from missionary radio station HCJB, The Voice of the Andes.

Missionaries in Quito reported that Araus and other evangelical pastors had been receiving threats from alleged Satanist groups in the city.

Church officials report that Araus received a phone call from a woman on the afternoon of the poisoning asking about his wife's condition. On being told that she was in critical condition, the caller reportedly said, "good! I hope she dies," and hung up.

While the tainted fruit juice was allegedly intended for the pastor, he did not drink it because of a stomach condition. Instead, he gave it to his wife who became violently ill immediately. She was admitted to the neighboring Vozandes Hospital in critical condition.

Ecuadorian police and the Nestlé company are investigating the poisoning, including the possibility that the juice may have been contaminated in the processing or packaging process. However, no other cases of poisoning from cartons of juice have been reported.

Church officials retrieved the juice package from the trash, but officials played down the chance of obtaining fingerprints from the carton.

Ecuadorian pastors wife dies after drinking tainted juice, Feb 16, 1999